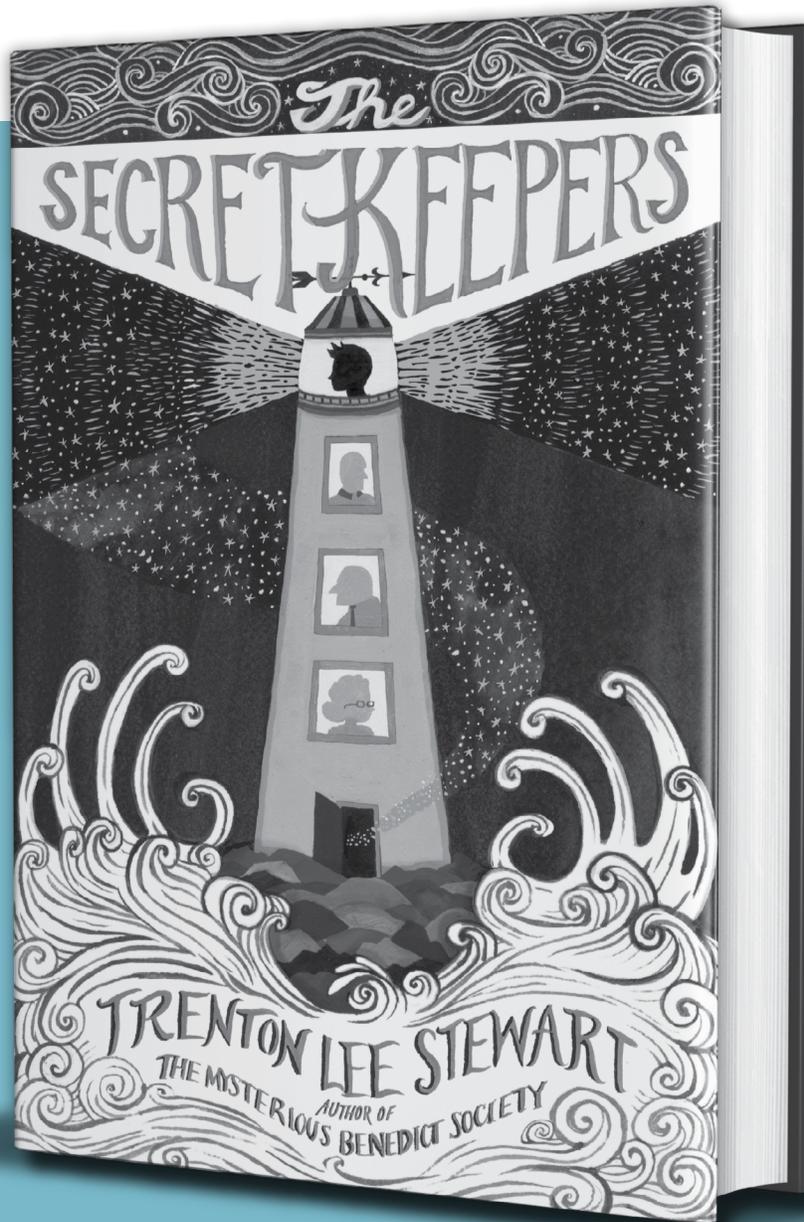


# THE SECRET KEEPERS



## Curriculum connections

- ❖ Language Arts
- ❖ Science
- ❖ Social Studies
- ❖ Character Education

Ages 8-12

# THE SECRET KEEPERS

## LANGUAGE ARTS

### Multiple Perspectives

Choose one event from the story and retell it from another character's point of view. For example: What were Mrs. P's first impressions of Reuben? What were Penny's first impressions of Reuben? How would Jack describe the events in the house? Ask students to brainstorm a list of events that would be interesting to think about from another character's perspective. Next, have students choose different characters and write about the same event from these different perspectives. Remind students that they must be able to justify anything they included by pointing to evidence in the story. For example, if they choose to write from Jack's perspective, they should remember what he is like as a character; he has a spirit of adventure and is somewhat disillusioned with life in his small town.

### Story Telling

Penny was able to transport Reuben to another place and time with her storytelling. A great storyteller needs to set the mood, pay attention to details, and use dialogue to make the characters come to life. Practice this skill with a storytelling challenge. Ask students to choose an event or moment in their life, and have them turn that moment into an outline for a written narrative. But instead of writing the story, have students practice telling the story, paying careful attention to setting the mood. Have students take turns telling their stories. After everyone has had the opportunity to become a storyteller, discuss as a class the similarities and differences between oral storytelling and writing a personal narrative.

### The Story of Jack

The final chapter gives a few clues pointing to the kind of life Jack leads in the future. Challenge students to write a spin-off story about one of Jack's adventures. They should make sure the story they create is consistent with what they know about Jack's character. The format of the story may be epistolary (e.g. letters to Penny) or a narrative. After the spin-off stories are complete, debrief as a class and discuss common themes or ideas. What were the same? What were different?

### Vocabulary Buddy Journals

Secret Keepers has many words and phrases that students may not use in everyday speech. Encourage students to keep a vocabulary journal as they read, recording words and phrases they do not usually use with friends and family. Make this a partner activity by having students share a journal with a partner. They should take turns recording words, writing the example sentence from the text, and then writing their own sentence using the word. Partners should work together to practice using the words they record and challenge one another to use the new words or phrases in their speech or writing.

### Letters to the Future

Penelope writes a letter to Jack (and future generations) describing the history of the watch. Leaving a letter for others in the future to read becomes very important as the story unfolds. Give students the opportunity to leave their own letter to the future. They can address

# THE SECRET KEEPERS

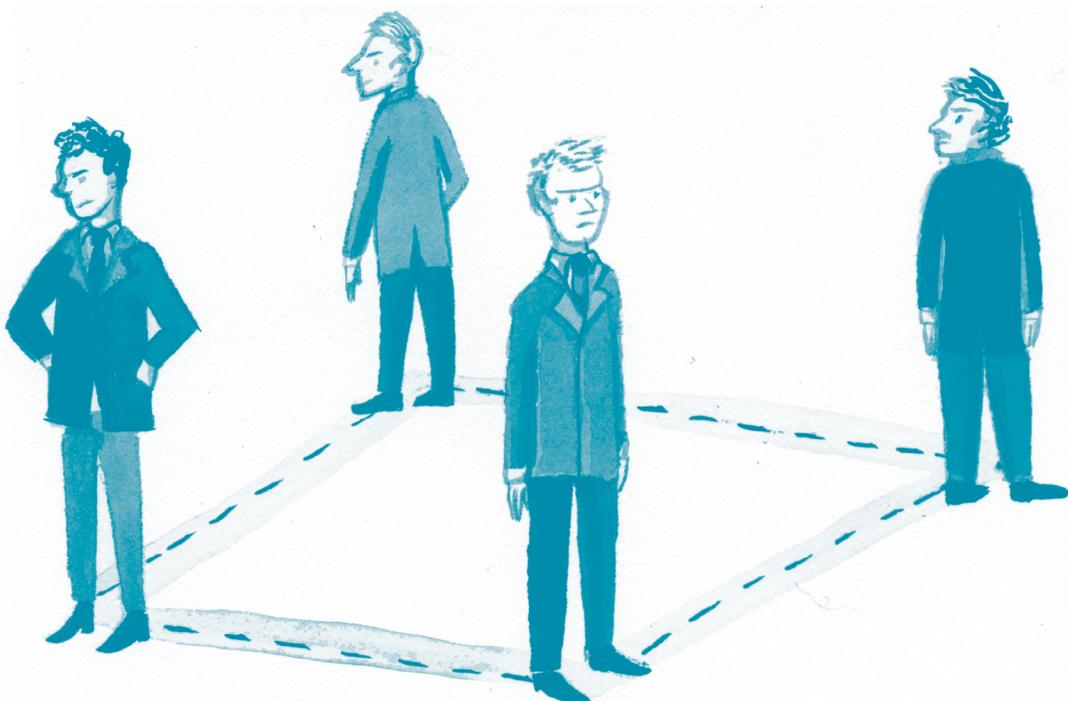
it to themselves, a younger sibling, or even the next generation. In their letter, they should include a description of their daily life and discuss the things that are important to them at the moment. After the letters are written, store them in a safe place and either send them home for safe-keeping to be opened in the future, or hold onto them and send them to students at some point many years from now.

## Argumentative Writing

Instead of trying to take the watch away from Reuben, what if The Smoke had tried to explain in writing the reason he deserved the watch? Have students pretend they are The Smoke and their goal is to convince Reuben to give them the watch. Students should make their claim and then provide at least three solid reasons (referring to the text for evidence) for why Reuben should give up the watch. As an extension, students might want to turn their argumentative writing into a persuasive speech.

## Informational Writing: Horology Society Conference

Horologists are people who study time and time keeping devices. While the watch in *The Secret Keepers* gave its owner a particular kind of power, even regular watches and clocks are the subject of fascination for many. Help students become horologists for a day and hone their informational writing skills with this research project. As a class, brainstorm a list of topics related to time, watches, or clocks. Then, have students choose a topic to research. Have students write a report on their topic and create some kind of visual aid or poster. Afterward, host a “Horology Society Conference.” Invite students from other classes to come and learn as students present their research. Help students to connect their work to college and career readiness by explaining that poster sessions such as this one is a way graduate students and professors share their work with colleagues.



# THE SECRET KEEPERS

## SCIENCE

### Technomagical Inventions

The watch seems magical until Mrs. Genevieve hypothesizes how it might work. Suddenly, the watch makes sense. Many modern inventions might seem magical at first (e.g. airplanes, digital pictures, and even magnets). Encourage students to choose a modern invention and learn about how it works. Start by having them describe why it might seem magical, and then have them describe the science. Using an inquiry-based approach, students should think about the questions they have and then use a combination of hands on investigation, online research, and interviews to discover how something that might seem magical really works. Students can create a presentation to share their learning.

### Invisibility Debate

Becoming invisible allowed Reuben to experience many different things, but is it scientifically possible to become invisible? In the field of optics, there are a number of advancements that might make invisibility a reality. Ask students to research optics and light bending to see how invisibility could be a reality. Then, ask them to debate the topic with one another. Use the following link as reference: [cnn.com/2016/07/20/health/invisibility-cloaks-research](http://cnn.com/2016/07/20/health/invisibility-cloaks-research).



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# THE SECRET KEEPERS

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## SOCIAL STUDIES

### Lighthouse Keepers A-Z

The Meyers Family continued to be lighthouse keepers even after the lighthouse became automated. Lighthouse keepers once had a very important job. Learn about lighthouse keepers by creating a class alphabet book. For every letter A-Z, have students collaborate to create a class book. Students should be encouraged to learn facts about lighthouses and lighthouse keepers and then determine how they might fit into the book. Students may want to take turns reading the book aloud to other classes or younger students once the book is complete.

### Lie Detector Game

Penny and her family knows if someone is telling the truth or not. It seems that Penny and the other members of the Meyers Family are very good at reading the body language and tone of voice of a person in order to determine if they are sincere. There are many similar

techniques that people in law enforcement rely upon to see if someone might be hiding the truth. Students may want to learn about how lie detector tests work, or learn about physical signs that can often indicate if a person is lying. Give students the opportunity to explore these ideas, and then challenge the class to a truth or lie test. Ask a few guests to write down two true facts about themselves and one thing that is not true. Then, ask each guest to sit in front of the room to be interviewed. Read each piece of information and ask the guest if it is true or false. Have the rest of the class watch the guest carefully and take notes on any changes in body language that might indicate if they are not telling the truth. Vote as a class on which statements are true and which one is the lie. Ask students to share the observations they recorded that led them to make their choice. After playing the game with several guests, debrief as a class. Was it easy to tell if they were lying? Why or why not?

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## CHARACTER EDUCATION

### Citizens Unite

Mrs. Genevieve and the citizens of New Umbra were able to unite and come together to save Reuben. Even though these citizens felt powerless as individuals, when they came together they were strong. Help students see for themselves the power of unity by choosing a cause that is meaningful to them. Have the class vote on a

project to pursue and develop a plan for how they can help. It can be a small local cause (such as cleaning up litter along a highway) or a bigger cause. The important factor is to ensure that students have a voice and that they can see how their efforts can help. After students plan and implement their project, debrief as a class and discuss how participating made them feel.

# THE SECRET KEEPERS

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### *Part I The Ticking Clock*

#### Chapter 1

- After reading the first chapter, what statements can you make about Reuben? Use details from the text to support your thinking. Compare your answers with a partner. Do you have the same impression of Reuben?

#### Chapter 2

- Why is this chapter called “The Delicious Smell of Fear”? Based on what is known so far, how would you describe The Smoke, The Counselor, and The Directions? How does Reuben feel about them?

#### Chapter 3

- Reuben and his mother entertain themselves by imagining their dream house. Do you think this is a good form of entertainment for them? What would you draw as your dream house?

#### Chapters 4 and 5

- Reuben meets two people with knowledge about watches. Who does he meet? What are your impressions of these two people? Use evidence from the story to support your thinking.

#### Chapter 6

- What happens when Reuben turns the watch key? What do you think this might mean? Support your thinking with details from the story.

#### Chapters 7 and 8

- What happens to Reuben when he uses the watch? What does he do to try to learn more about the watch? Can you foresee any problems that might

happen if Reuben uses the watch too much? Use details from the story to explain your answer.

#### Chapters 9 and 10

- What happens when Reuben calls the person who placed the advertisement? What conclusion does Reuben draw?
- How does Reuben’s realization that having the watch might be dangerous change him? Use details from the story to support your claim.

#### Chapters 11 and 12

- Who did Reuben think was the original owner of the watch? What specific information leads to him changing his opinion? How might this information become a turning point in the story?
- How does the staring stranger make Reuben feel? What advice would you give Reuben in this situation?

#### Chapter 13

What did Reuben do to escape from the stranger? Is this similar to the advice you would have given him?



# THE SECRET KEEPERS

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### *Part II The Meyer Legacy*

#### Chapters 14, 15, and 16

- What are Reuben's first impressions of Penny? What do you think is the significance of the poem he hears her reciting?
- How does Penny react to meeting Reuben?
- How does the story Penny tells about Penelope add to what Reuben knows about the watch?
- How would you describe Penelope?

#### Chapters 17, 18, and 19

- What are the members of Penny's family like? Use details from the chapter to describe the family members.
- What do you think Reuben plans to do with the information he hears from Penny's family? How do you think he feels about using this information? Use evidence from these chapters to support your thinking.

#### Chapters 20 and 21

- What does Reuben discover once he ventures outside? How does the riddle help him?
- What does Reuben find in the cave? What new information does he learn?

#### Chapters 22 and 23

- What happens when Reuben tries to get out of the cave? Why was it important to pay attention to high and low tide?

- How did Reuben react to hearing Penny call his name? What was Penny's response to hearing about the watch?

#### Chapter 24

- What does Reuben learn about Jack? Using evidence from this chapter and previous chapters, how would you describe Jack?



# THE SECRET KEEPERS

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### *Part III Home and Not Home*

#### Chapter 25

- Do you think Mrs. Genevieve can be trusted? What makes you think this?

#### Chapter 26

- Why didn't Reuben reveal from the beginning that he can only be invisible for 15 minutes and the watch drains him of energy? How did Penny respond to hearing this new information?

#### Chapters 27 and 28

- Describe how Jack and Reuben were able to get The Smoke's attention. What did they discover once they were inside his mansion? Why is this information important?
- What does Reuben do once Jack leads everyone away? What does he discover about the mansion?

#### Chapters 29 and 30

- Why do you think there are so many traps in the house? Why is Reuben's size an advantage?
- Choose at least one of the traps in the mansion and describe how it works. You may also create a diagram to illustrate your thinking. Be sure to use details from the story.

#### Chapters 31 and 32

- How did Jack get away from The Smoke and his henchmen?
- What is Reuben's plan for stealing the watch? Do you think it will be successful? Why or why not?

#### Chapters 33 and 34

- What happens when Jack and Reuben return to the mansion? What problem do they face?

#### Chapters 35 and 36

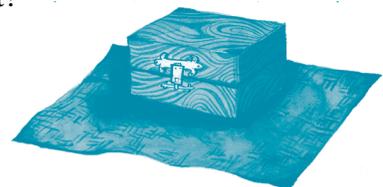
- How does Reuben solve the problem they are facing?
- What does Reuben learn about the connection between the watches and the inventor's words? What specific words in the inventor's poem are clues to the way the watches work when they are together?

#### Chapters 37 and 38

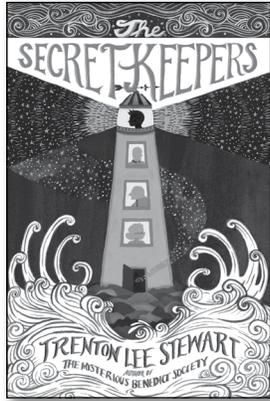
- How does Mrs. Genevieve help Jack, Reuben, and Penny? How do her actions show how she has changed since the beginning of the story?
- How does Reuben's life change as a result of his adventures?
- What happens to the watches? How does Reuben feel at the end of the story? Why?

#### Summative Questions

- What event or experience in the story do you think changed Reuben the most?
- What do you think is the theme of this story? What details from the story support your idea?
- Choose two characters from the story and compare and contrast them. How are they alike? How are they different?



# THE SECRET KEEPERS



## THE SECRET KEEPERS

HC 978-0-316-38955-6

Also available as an ebook

## about the book

When Reuben discovers an extraordinary antique watch, he soon learns it has a secret power and his life takes an intriguing turn. At first he is thrilled with his new treasure, but as one secret leads to another, Reuben finds himself torn between his innately honest nature and the lure to be a hero.

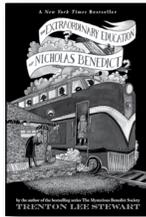
Now he is on a dangerous adventure—full of curious characters, treacherous traps, and hairsbreadth escapes—as he races to solve the mystery before it is too late. Even with fearless Penny, mighty Jack, and the wise Mrs. Genevieve on his side, can Reuben outwit and outmaneuver the sly villain called The Smoke and his devious defenders the Directions and save the city from a terrible fate?

## ALSO BY TRENTON LEE STEWART



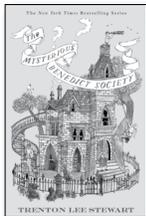
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## PRAISE FOR THE BOOK

★ “An exciting, fully imagined world filled with mystery and danger, where children can have real adventures without parental supervision.”

—Publishers Weekly

★ “Children will be caught up in the mystery, trying to decipher the clues as they follow Reuben and his new-found friends in their race to save the town . . . Another winner from Trenton Lee Stewart.”

—School Library Connection

★ “This epic story filled with adventure and twists and turns is certain to keep readers’ interest from beginning to end.”

—School Library Journal

Whitney Loiber



## about the author

Trenton Lee Stewart is the author of *The Secret Keepers* and the award-winning and *New York Times* bestselling *Mysterious Benedict Society* series. He lives in Little Rock, Arkansas.

